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REMARKS

ON SOME

OBSERVATIONS,

Addressed to the AUTHOR

OF THE

LETTER

TO

Dr. *WATERLAND.* K.

By the Author of the Letter.

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DR. N. E. R. A. D.

1911

REMARKS

ON SOME

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

THE *Letter to Dr. W.* had been published near three years, and the Controversy, that followed it, quite over and almost forgotten, when these *Observations upon it* appeared in print: and as there seem'd to be very little prudence in reviving a debate that had been managed with so much heat; so it was reasonable, after so long an interval, to expect at least a calm and disinterested enquiry into the state of it, and the moments of truth produc'd on either side.

But instead of this, I was surprized to find no argument of Learning, no point of Religion treated in them; nothing by which the publick could either be entertain'd or edified; nothing but a virulent, malicious invective; to prove the purpose of my writings, and even *my heart to be entirely infidel.* [p. 10]

As to the merit of the performance, 'tis much below my notice; nor should I have taken the trouble of animadverting upon it, but for the occasion of opening my mind more clearly in some points wherein I find my self misrepresented; as well as to expose more distinctly to publick view, that genuine Spirit of Modern Orthodoxy and its Advocates, which I have declared against so freely, as pernicious to publick peace and liberty: for had this Author written on purpose to confirm the character I have given of it, he could not have done it more effectually, than by producing this original to confront with my picture.

He sets out by declaring, that the profession I make of an *impartial love for truth,*

truth, encouraged him to make this address to me, in hopes of drawing from me an ingenuous confession of my errors; and he opens his second paragraph by observing, that *I can retract an error of inadvertence with a tolerable good grace*: this had some appearance of candour; and flattered still the hopes I had entertain'd of a temperate review of the controversy; but he scarce proceeds a line farther, before his *Orthodox Spirit* begins to work; and the encouraging hopes conceived of me in the first paragraph, become improbable in the second, quite desperate in the third, where I am declared *the last man, who will own the force of any conviction; who would sooner give up every article of faith, than part with one doit of admiration*. [2] And as the Spiritual Thermometer rises, with the increasing heat of his zeal, so my character gradually sinks, from *rude to profane*; [9] from *profane to infidel*; [10] nay *much worse than infidel*; [39, 40] so profligate, that the *meekest man alive can't help being provok'd at me*; [9] *that charity*
itself

itself can make no excuse for me; [11] and so abandon'd at last, that 'tis not possible for me to believe a God. [23, 39.]

He allows, that I have argued *against the Infidel plan in a manner strictly conclusive; [5]* that I declare myself a Christian; am angry for being *barely suspected* of the contrary; [4] that I *disavow all notions derogatory to the true honour of Moses: [21]* and where my words and actions so well agree, there was some room surely for a charitable thought of me; some ground to think that I could not be in the same sentiments with the man I was confuting: yet he makes no scruple to affirm, that *Charity itself cannot excuse me; that 'tis no breach of it to believe me an infidel.* 'Tis plain that his charity must be of a quite different kind from that which *St. Paul* recommends, that which *suffereth long, and is kind; that thinketh no evil; that believeth all things; hopeth all things. [1 Cor. xiii.]*

But how is it after all that he proves me to be an Infidel? because I differ from those, who assume to themselves the title of
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of *Orthodox*, in my notions of *Inspiration* and the necessity of it; in which the writers of all ages have differed from each other, without any such imputation; and the Divines are so divided at this day, that many will think me the sounder Christian, for the very same cause that he excludes me from the number of them. Were it worth while to retort the charge on himself, I could do it with much more reason: not by any cavils, or distinctions, which few people understand; but from plain and evident principles in which all Christians agree; or to use his own words, from every dash of his pen; his envenom'd pages; [2, 40] inveterate spite, malice, and the want of every Christian grace, supplied only by a bigotted, Jewish zeal, and the pretext of an *Orthodox Faith*.

The cause of all this rage against me is my treating Dr. *W.* it seems, in so rude and contemptuous a manner; [p. 4] and with such ungentle language as eyes were never surfeited with. [7] Yet this rudeness and strange language of mine amount to nothing more than to dull, dogmatic, pedantic,

pedantic, bigotted [2] names, not applied to Dr. *W.* but in general only, to certain Divines, who, by their method of vindicating Religion, seem to have a just title to them. So weak and blunt is my poor spleen, for want of an *Orthodox edge*; for want of being temper'd in that *holy fire*! but I must needs be an unequal match for writers, trained and disciplin'd in all the arts of scolding: as in a fam'd *Archdeacon's late charge to his Clergy*: where instead of instructing them in Christian principles; how to overcome evil with good; to recommend Religion by their practice; and conquer the prejudices of its enemies by the innocence of their lives; to excel in virtue and learning; &c. instead of this, I say, the whole purpose of his harangue is to exhort them to *call names stoutly, and to scold manfully*: wherever they find a *Deist* to call him roundly an *Atheist*; and a man who *believes nothing, more credulous, than if he believed every thing.* [Dr. *W.*'s second Charge, p. 7, 21]

But whatever harm my malice design'd to Dr. *W.* it has quite defeated itself, by giving

giving the alarm to such *able pens and learned hands to come in to his assistance*; [p. 6] and to this Great Orator of ours to celebrate his praises with so much eloquence. An *excellent person; unwearied in his researches of useful science; a successful defender of one important Article; and a seasonable Vindicator of the Scriptures in general.* [4] Of learning, industry, exactness of judgment remarkably great and extensive, [6] one of the greatest scholars and Divines of the age, [7] &c. but the peculiar merit of the Doctor, for which all the world, he tells us, *has reason to thank him*, is his wonderful art of inventing so many different solutions to the same difficulties; and diversifying his arguments, so that some or other may hit and affect men of all tempers and dispositions. [6] As if the Advocates of Religion were to consider only what is palatable; not what is true; and to apply to the affections, not to the reason of men: for let his solutions be never so many; his arguments never so diversified; 'tis possible,

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that they all may be false; and almost certain, that no more than one of them can be true: but no matter for that, if they *bit men's tempers* and *suit their apprehensions*, 'tis just the same, we see, to this pious Observator.

But though Dr. *W.* with all his skill can furnish nothing to *please my palate*: yet *he has the happiness*, it seems, *to see all his Explications of Scripture confirmed by able pens and learned hands*: [6] and for this we are referred to the Author of *Revelation examin'd with candour*. A single Author indeed, but of weight enough to supply the place of many. For whatever he may say of Dr. *W.* 'tis this Author, I know, who passes with our Observator and all others of his principles, for the very *Hero of modern Orthodoxy*; *the scourge of Infidels*; allowed to have a far better fancy for *ingenious solutions* than all the other *vindicators* put together.

I am angry, he says, with Dr. *W.* because he *excels in his profession*, writes with
superior

superior learning, and what is more unpardonable, believes what he writes. [8] As to his *superior learning*, I have no intention to dispute it with him; especially if 'tis to be measured by a *superiority of his Faith*. My *Faith* is of an humble kind; claims no other merit, than of being a slave to my *reason*; to whose dictates it pays an absolute submission: whatever my reason declares to be true, I cannot help believing; what it declares to be otherwise, 'tis not in my power to believe, though all the rewards in the world were offer'd me.

If Dr. *W.*'s *Faith* be of the same kind with mine; a principle grounded on the perception of truth; it might be reasonable to allow from a *superiority of his Faith*, a *superiority of Knowledge*; and whenever I fall short of him, I could only say, what was said to one, who was affirming a strange story; *you, who know the fact to be true, have more reason to believe it, than I, who do not*: in the mean while, all that I can say, is, that if it be not in our power to believe what we please, and

if all rational faith must be the effect of rational conviction, then to believe or not to believe, as 'tis a thing indifferent and no way criminal, so ought to make no difference of character among reasonable men: whoever takes pains to inform himself, and believes on the best information, whatever be the sum of his faith, is certainly the soundest believer; and generally speaking, it seems to be in minds, as 'tis in bodies, a sure proof of softness, where every thing that strikes them, is apt to make an impression.

Were I to guess at the character of our *Observer*, by the character of his writing; I should take him for some young, academical Adventurer; who had been drawing out the flowers of his rhetorick, and emptying his Common-place-book against me: *Procrustes; Salmones; flammæ Jovis, sonitus olympi; nec lex justior ulla, &c.* [p. 3, 21, 40]; the trite examples of every boy's declamation, are the only instances he has given of his great erudition.

His solecisms and blunders in language, and in sense, when he labours most to

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raise his stile, confirm the same conjecture. He talks [39] of eyes surfeiting with language; [7] of dirt recoiling without reaching the mark, [8] of fire a reservoir to lodge infection in, [40] &c. reservoirs of water we often hear of; but this of fire is an invention of his own; and the rest of the paragraph is a piece of nonsense so sublime, that without attempting any explication of it, I shall lay it before the reader just as I find it. *The waters, earth and heavens have been sufficiently polluted already; and this element only remains to purify the rest, and disperse the pestilential vapours, which your envenomed pages have scattered in the world.* [40]

These absurdities in style and sense naturally lead me to think of some forward youthful writer; but when I consider his high opinion and great conceit of his own understanding; [10, 22, 34] his progress in *Orthodoxy*; his flaming zeal and holy fury that animate every page; things unknown and unnatural to a boy; I am forced to turn my thoughts to one of more years and experience: and should be
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much concern'd for the sake of the University which I love; if any member of it, who supports any character, or enjoys any honours there, should be found capable of so wretched and contemptible, as well as so malicious and wicked a performance. But 'tis time to leave what is personal, and examine the little of reasoning and argument he pretends to; which consists of two points.

1. That I am an Infidel; labouring to weaken the authority of Scripture, and by consequence the foundation of Christianity.

2. That my book therefore ought to be burnt and myself banish'd, agreeably to my own reasoning against the Author of *Christianity as old*, &c.

For the proof of my infidelity he appeals to a passage of the Letter to Dr. W. wherein 'tis said, that the *example of Josephus, a learned and zealous Jew, might teach us to entertain more moderate and qualified sentiments of the divine origin of the Law, and the divine Inspiration of Moses.* Upon which he begs leave to ask this plain question

question, sufficient, he thinks, to confound me. *What can you mean by more moderate and qualified sentiments, but that the Law had no divine origin, its Founder no divine inspiration; since there can be no medium between divine and not divine?* [p. 15]

I have already explain'd my meaning very fully and very clearly on this head *; but since he either cannot or will not comprehend me, I am content to declare it once more: That whereas the modern Advocates of Christianity insist, that every word of the *Mosaic writings must be received as divinely inspired; every act of Moses as miraculously directed from heaven;* my opinion is, that with *the notion of general Inspiration*, which I readily allow, we are obliged by fact and the history itself, to admit a distinction and exception, in some *particular passages of the Law; some particular acts* of its Founder.

But the greatest scandal I have given, is by imputing, as he urges, some *kind of fiction to Moses*. [22] I have indeed pro-

* See Remarks on a Reply to the Defence of the Letter, p. 68, &c.

posed it as a problem, but with all the diffidence and caution imaginable, * *Whether some degree of fiction may not possibly be allowed in certain cases, to solve the difficulties of the Mosaic writings, without any hurt to their authority.* This our Observator treats as downright Blasphemy and *Atheism itself*; [23] declares *all fiction inconsistent with any degree of Inspiration*, [21] *unworthy of a man divinely inspired*: [31] and reproaches me for defending *political lying, for the good of the people; and being the first Christian writer that ever maintain'd so strange doctrine.* [20]

I do not take notice of this to defend Political Lying, or to confirm my own reasoning, but to expose the folly and rashness of his. What I mentioned on that subject, I drew from the *best Moralists of the Heathen world*; and shewed withal, by the testimony of some of the *Primitive Fathers*, that the notion was suppos'd to be borrowed from *Moses himself*: and it were as easy to shew, what

* See *Defence of a Letter to Dr. W. p. 45. It. Remarks on a Reply, p. 50, 51.*

he so rashly denies, that almost all the Christian Writers, from the earliest Ages, and very best Authors of Morality in these later times, *Grotius, Puffendorf, &c.* hold it to be as innocent in some cases, to *deceive the people for their good*, as for *Parents to deceive their Children, Physicians their Patients*; which is all the length that I have ever gone or ever meant to go in favour of any deceit or fiction whatsoever.

But this, he tells us, is giving a greater power to Governours, than God himself claims; of dispensing with the sacred and inviolable laws of truth. [20] Strange how he chanc'd to stumble on *the sacred and inviolable laws of truth*: writers of his class never raise their thoughts so high; or venture so far from shore; but stick close to the *infallible word, and universal Inspiration of the Bible*. If there be any such laws, as without all doubt there are, 'tis certain that the Bible itself must be tried by them. And if they can't be dispens'd with by

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God, there seems to be little sense in what Dr. *W.* often alledges in his vindications of Scripture; that *the Command of God alters the nature of the thing*: for is not *that to dispense with his sacred and inviolable laws*? But our Observator, having overshoot himself here, before he was aware, makes a quick retreat into his old trenches of *absolute Inspiration*, and leaves the laws of truth and reason to shift for themselves.

He affirms *all degrees of fiction to be inconsistent with any degree of Inspiration*. Yet it would not be difficult to give instances of *some degree of it*, through all the *inspired Writers* both of the Old and New Testament. Pray what was St. Paul doing, when he became *all things to all men*? Was he not employing *some little degree of fiction*? When our Saviour appeared to the Disciples going to *Emmaus*; the very purpose of his appearing was, *to tarry with them a while in the inn*; yet *he made as if he would go farther, till they constrain'd him.* (Luke xxiv.) Is not this likewise

likewise some *small degree of it*? how rash then is his Assertion; that the least *degree of fiction is inconsistent with his nature, whose Law is the truth*? [23]

But I take shelter, it seems, in *partial Inspiration, and bring the great names of Grotius and Tillotson to protect me in it*. Upon which he observes, that *had I done as much for Christianity as they, I might have had some plea to be indulg'd in the like particularities*. [33] A fine observation truly! as if a greater merit gave a greater right to deliver what was false or hurtful to Christianity: no, the greater their services, the greater is the presumption, that they were still carrying them on, and perfecting their work: and in my opinion, they could not have done greater, than by beating down the systems and prejudices of zealots, and fairly owning facts that lie open and visible to every rational Christian. But they, it seems, *only modestly suggest, that in a few instances of no moment, the superintendence of the Holy Spirit might be suspended*. Yet their few and modest suggestions reach

so far as to intimate; that in *the historical*, and even *the moral books of Scripture* there is no necessity for Inspiration; since natural Talents are sufficient to discover and evince the truth: contrary to our Observator's assertion, that all *the influence and truth of Scripture depend on its Inspiration*. [31] As if nothing could be true, or deserve to be consider'd as such, unless *divinely inspired*.

'Tis the reasoning of all divines, that the *truth of the Gospels* stands on the same bottom with every other *historical truth* in the world: and consequently, to deny their authority, is to deny the faith and truth of all history, and to destroy at once the credit of all antiquity. This reasoning is just and strong, if the Gospels be of the same class and species with other histories; a narration of facts by credible persons, who knew them to be true, and related what they knew of them: but 'tis of very little force, if they must needs be received as *universally and absolutely inspired by God*: for in this view
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they have no relation to other histories; stand on a quite different bottom; and their credit may be disputed, without hurting common faith or common history.

To give assent to facts affirmed by proper witnesses, as 'tis an act highly rational, so 'tis all that is wanted to give them a reception in the world. The character of Inspiration superadded serves only to introduce difficulties and doubts, where all was clear before, and casts an air of imposture over the whole. In the case therefore of the Gospels, where, according to *Grotius* and *Tillotson*, there is no want of such Inspiration, and where we find no claim or pretence to it; the asserting it to be necessary seems dangerous to Christianity itself, by unhinging and perplexing its proper and natural evidence.

But besides the great names of *Grotius* and *Tillotson*, I brought a greater still for my opinion, that of *St. Paul*; who owns himself on some occasions *destitute of divine Inspiration*. This our *Observer* grants in two places; but for a third, where

where the Apostle declares, that he *speaks after the manner of men**, he affirms it to be *nothing to the purpose*: [25] for if he did not *speak after the manner of men*, says he, *how would it be possible for men to understand him?* But if those words of St. Paul relate to the manner of speaking only, what occasion for a distinction, where there can be no difference, whether *inspired or not?* for in both cases he must *speak to the senses*, and draw his arguments from *the notions of men*, or they could be no arguments at all to mankind. No, he seems to me to signify here, what he does in the other places, that he is not delivering the dictates of God, but his own natural sentiments, as other men ordinarily do.

St. Jerom confirms this opinion, as our Observator allows, but whilst he allows the thing, with the usual art of these writers, he cavils at my words; and exclaims, that *Jerom does not say, what I make him to say*, that St. Paul disavows all pretence to divine Inspiration. [26] And

* Gal. iii. 15.

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yet, 'tis the whole purpose of *Jerom's* argument to assert and prove the very thing. But to shew the contrary, he gives us, what he calls a *juster translation than mine, and nearer the original of Jerom's words*. The old method of blowing up envy against me; by calling that a *translation*, which I never design'd for such; but for an extract only of an Author's sentiments; which is the case at present: for does not *Jerom*, in the place I refer to, affirm, that *St. Paul has mistaken the sense, and made an improper application of a certain word, on which his argument turns?* This, though intimated by me*, is not found in the words I produce, but is found however in the context, which our Observator could not be ignorant of. With what face then does he call that a *translation*, and arraign it as imperfect, which he knows could never be meant for one? 'tis only to raise a clamour and support the false charge he revives against

* See Remarks on a Reply, 78.

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me, of perverting and misapplying my principal testimonies. [43]

To return to the case of Inspiration, he allows, that *St. Paul* on some occasions declares himself destitute of it. [25] Yet in spite of *St. Paul's* concession and his own, he persists stoutly to maintain the *absolute and unlimited Inspiration of all the Scriptures; that their influence and truth depend upon it.* [31] *That there's a necessity to admit or reject the whole.* [34] *That the only basis of Christianity is the infallible truth, and universal Inspiration of the sacred Books.* [43] What pure and genuine Orthodoxy is this? to believe against the conviction even of sense; against the evidence of plain fact; to subdue reason, judgment, and every faculty to Faith.

As for the reason of his Faith, he tells us gravely, that *partial Inspiration will in the end be no Inspiration at all.* [34] For, when every man has pick'd and cull'd out of his Bible what he does not like, very little of genuine Inspiration will be left behind. But must we then reject a fact because of
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its consequences? and must we not be content with our Religion, just as God has given it us? To strengthen what is from God, by adding to it, is just as impious as to weaken it by detracting from it. *Partial Inspiration* is a fact, which the history and testimony of the Scriptures themselves demonstrate: whatever be the effects of it, 'tis necessary to submit to them. It may probably overthrow the Systems of ancient or modern Divines; but cannot possibly hurt any truth or article of Faith, that is necessary to be believ'd.

2. I proceed now to the other part of our Observator's argument, or the sentence he has pronounced against me; *that my book ought to be burnt, and my self banish'd.* This he pretends to ground on my own reasoning against the *Author of Christianity as old, &c.* that since I have suggested this as a just punishment of an Author, in many respects less criminal than my self, and thought him worthy of so rigorous a treatment, my punishment

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ought to be the more remarkably severe. [40, 41] But here again, as in most other places, he mistakes and misrepresents me. I have declar'd no opinion; suggested nothing about it of my own; my meaning was to state a mere fact, as it stood among the ancients; and to wipe off a scandal imputed to Christianity, of having introduced into society a spirit of persecution unknown to the Heathens; by shewing, in contradiction to the *Author of Christianity as old, &c.* that the Pagans punish'd men for opinions; had their *Holy Wars* and *Religious Tests* as well as we. I am far from affirming, with our *Observator*, that these principles are right, agreeable to Christianity, the maxims of Reason, and the laws of Society: [40] no; my opinion is just contrary; that Reason was as much abused then, as Christianity is now, whenever any free debate or inquiry after Truth is made punishable for the sake of it; or indeed for any other cause, than as it actually disturbs the quiet of the State.

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My reasoning against the *Author of Christianity as old, &c.* is a mere *argument ad hominem*; to prove that an attempt to abolish Christianity is contrary to the very maxims of Reason and Morality, that he himself lays down. If I do not mistake his purpose; I take my reasoning to be just: if I do; my argument is so far weaken'd by it, as 'tis pointed singly against a design to subvert the establish'd Religion, in order to advance Reason in its place, as a more perfect guide to the people.

If the Religion of a country was to be consider'd only as an Imposture; an engine of government to keep the people in order; even there an endeavour to unhinge it, unless with a design to substitute a better in its stead, would in my opinion be highly unreasonable. But should the Priests of such a Religion, for the sake of their authority and power, labour to impose their own fictions for divine truths; to possess the people with an enthusiastic zeal for them; manageable only

by themselves, and to be played even against the government, as oft as it served their separate interests ; in such a case, 'tis the duty of every man, who loves his country, and his fellow creatures, to oppose all such attempts ; to confine Religion to its proper bounds ; to the use for which it was instituted ; of inspiring benevolence, modesty, submission into the people : nor suffer the credit of it to grow too strong for that of the State ; the authority of the Priest, for that of the Magistrate.

Was Religion, I say, to be consider'd as an imposture, all men would think this conduct reasonable : and where it is in reality a *Revelation from Heaven*, the case is not altered, as far as the end of that Revelation is perverted and abused by the arts or the folly of men : as the *Jewish* was by the *Pharisees* ; the *Christian* by some of its *modern Advocates*. In such circumstances, in proportion as a man values his Religion, and believes it to be of God, he will exert himself to clear it from all human

human impositions ; which render it either of no effect, or of a mischievous one to society ; propagating *rage and strife and every evil work*, instead of the peace and happiness 'twas design'd to introduce. And if the end of all Revelation be to enforce with greater vigour, and by means more affecting to sense, the obligations of the natural Law ; those Priests are the truest friends to God and man, who labour to adapt it the most effectually to that end ; to expound it by the known principles of reason and morality ; and to make it amiable, by making it plain, rational, intelligible to common understandings.

As for those, who take the contrary way ; who either deny all natural law, or make it bend as they please, to their own comments on Scripture ; who build Religion on a principle of faith, distinct from reason ; look on the latter with a jealous eye, as an instrument and engine of Satan ; who measure all truth by authority ; all credibility by testimony ; by which authority still and testimony they mean

mean little more than their own, and to draw the greater dependence on themselves ; for these writers, I say, 'tis the duty of every rational Christian, to expose their principles, as slavish and superstitious ; destructive of that good, for which all Religion was given ; turning the best thing in the world into the worst ; a Revelation from heaven, into a doctrine hurtful and pernicious to mankind.

Again ; where Religion, as with us, is received as of divine Authority, and on the best grounds and reasons embrac'd as such ; though I greatly condemn the perverseness of contesting truths so strongly established, yet I cannot think it agreeable either to Reason or Religion, to punish even such, as are hardy enough to call in question the reality of Revelation itself : for 'tis the greatest weakness and absurdity to think, that truth can ever be hurt by any examination whatsoever : it may be oppressed a while by faction, and stifled by power ; but in a free debate, as in free air and exercise, it always regains its strength and vigour :
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controversy to truth, is like a gentle wind to trees; it shakes the head, but fastens the root. Truth is naturally so amiable, that wherever 'tis expos'd to view, it necessarily draws all to admire it; and the more 'tis expos'd, the more strongly it attracts. Where artifice indeed and fraud prevail in the stead of it, there all inquiry must industriously be discouraged, as a dangerous and fatal enemy; sure to detect and expose the cheat: and wherever 'tis discourag'd, there's always reason to suspect some latent imposture: now as sure as Truth and Falshood are contrary to each other; so sure it is, that the same method of treating them cannot possibly be of service to both.

As far as my experience has reached, either in ancient or modern History, there's not an instance on record, where a fair examination has ever done harm to a good cause. The attacks on Christianity, urged on by its warmest enemies, always turn to its advantage: they engage the Clergy to study and search into the
true

true grounds of it; keep them in breath and exercise; and train them by constant discipline, to be able champions and defenders of it: they clear Religion it self of all the rust and rubbish, which by the negligence or the art of its managers, it may have contracted: and above all, they enforce and lay open the genuine proofs of it; which by time itself, naturally grow languid and ineffectual; till a new debate, like a new publication, sends them fresh again into the world, in their original force and lustre.

'Tis then my firm principle and persuasion, that a free inquiry into all points of Religion, is always useful and beneficial; and for that reason never to be punish'd or prohibited. It opens the minds and reforms the manners of the people; makes them reasonable, sociable, governable; easy to such as differ from them, and as little scandaliz'd at the different opinion, as the different complexion of their neighbour: whereas the restraint of this liberty, and the imposition of systems
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and articles, that must not be call'd in question, nourishes a churlish spirit of bigotry, uncharitableness, enthusiasm, which no Civil Power can moderate; a spirit that has so oft involv'd mankind in wars and bloodshed; and by turns endanger'd the ruin of every Christian Country in the World.

If therefore in my argument against *Christianity as old*, &c. I am understood to recommend or suggest in any manner the reasonableness of punishing the Author; I disclaim and disavow it, as contrary to my intention and my principles: all such punishment is against the interest of society; the interest of truth; the interest of Religion itself: which, as it could not have been propagated at first, but by a liberty of thinking, writing, preaching; so cannot be preserv'd in its purity, but by the very same means.

To return then to our Observer's sentence; that *my books ought to be burnt and my self banish'd*. As for my books, there's no saving them from the flames:

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but for my person, he is willing to commute the punishment, from exile abroad, to confinement at home. [41] But lest we should suspect him of any humanity or compassion in the proposal, he soon gives us to understand, that 'tis but to harass and plague me the more by it: the commutations of these men are not to mitigate, but enhance the rigour of punishment. I am to be kept at home, that he and all others of the same stamp may rail, preach, and pray over me, till I become a *standing spectacle* [41] of terror and example to all who dare to expose their Schemes. This puts me in mind of the poor *Jews* at *Rome*; who every week in Lent are oblig'd to attend a sermon, and hear an angry Monk preach at them, and call them names by the hour, out of the same Christian principle, that our Observer professes, the same *honest intention of convincing them*. [12]

But I have already undergone, he says, the worst sort of banishment a liberal mind can suffer; a total one, from the hearts
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and affections of all good men: [42] that the cordial friendship, the love and real esteem, with which I used to be treated, is now dwindled into cold respect and a distant complaisance. He does me the honour then to allow, that I was once a favourite, cordially esteem'd and lov'd by all, till an aversion to my opinions created an aversion to my person. As if a man were the less amiable for some particular sentiments, or the less sincere for declaring them: strange character of friends! whom neither old acquaintance, nor esteem, nor a long intercourse of friendly offices could restrain from discarding me, when discovered to think differently from them. Would not the same men who banish me thus from their affections, as readily banish me from all society? Nay, have they not attempted to do it, as far as it was in their power? and will such a conduct do credit to any set of men, in a country where reason and liberty have any influence? Can *these good men*, who discard me,

charge me with any falshood or treachery in friendship? with the refusal of any good office in my power; any act of humanity or courtesy to any of them? No, as they cannot charge me, I'm sure, with any offence in practice, so I am the easier under the disgrace I suffer for what is merely speculative.

But whatever I have lost with our *Observer's good men*, I have the comfort to find with others; *good enough* for me; who admit me to their company and honour me with their friendship. Men of enlarged Minds and generous sentiments; who make true religion the rule, and virtue the end of their living; who take immorality to be the greatest heresy; and measure the merit of their friends, not by their faith, but by a nobler principle, their charity; who reckon it no breach of friendship to differ in opinion; and even value me perhaps the more, for what the others persecute me. With men of this turn I shall breathe at least fresh air; and have more pleasure in the
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ease of one hour's conversation, than in years spent with the morose and the captious; under the slavish fear of offending, by starting any thing out of the road and train of popular thinking.

I have now followed our Observer thro' all his chain of reasoning; which I could not have submitted to, but to relieve some short intervals of leisure in an absence from books: and tho' I think him very injudicious in the choice and use of his materials, yet I must allow him to have shewn some art in the disposition of them. For having observ'd in what vogue the Sessions Paper has been in of late, and what demand for that kind of reading; he has contriv'd, we see, to throw his own papers into that form: the *Trial and Conviction of a notorious Infidel*; the *Sentence pronounc'd against him*; his *Confession, and Recantation*; with the *Ordinary's Sermon, and long Prayer at his Execution*. What justice has been done me in the trial, I must leave to the judgment of others; but

for the *Confession* here drawn up for me; I declare it to be false and spurious; such as I never did, nor ever will subscribe. Strange, that a man can be so silly as to imagine, that were I disposed to recant, I should not do it in my own words, rather than his! but I have nothing to recant on the occasion; nothing to confess, but the same *four Articles*, that I've already confess'd.

1. *That the Jews borrowed some of their customs from Ægypt.*
2. *That the Ægyptians were possess'd of arts and learning in Moses's time.*
3. *That the primitive Writers, in vindicating Scripture, found it necessary sometimes to recur to Allegory.*
4. *That the Scriptures are not of absolute and universal Inspiration*.*

These are the only crimes that I have been guilty of against Religion: and by reducing the Controversy to these four heads; and declaring my whole meaning to be compriz'd in them, I did in reality

* See Remarks on a Reply, &c.

recant every thing else, that thro' heat or inadvertency had dropt from me; every thing that could be construed to a sense hurtful to Christianity. But this is a Recantation that does not please *our Observer*; *these four beads*, he says, *may be debated innocently*: [29] and *no recantation* will satisfy him, but what carries crime and guilt along with it. What pity it is that *these inquisitors of ours* have not the power of the rack to extort what confessions they please? All that this good man aims at, is to make me odious and detestable to every body; with a true *Popish Spirit*, he would draw me in to recant, and then proceed to burn; or with the old revenge of an *Italian*; first make me blaspheme, and then stab me.

But after so much bitterness of spirit, so much malice and rancour discharg'd against me, 'tis surprizing at last to see with what gravity he closes the whole, with *a long formal Prayer* for my conversion. He talks of *some wretches who say the Lord's Prayer backwards*. [19] What he means by it I cannot tell: but if to
 pray

(40)
pray backwards, be to invert the intent
and effect of Prayer; to make it abominable
to God, ridiculous to man; he must
needs be the greatest Master of it, who
thinks forty pages of railing a proper pre-
face to four of praying *. This it is, after
all, that does the greatest hurt, and gives
the greatest scandal in Religion, to see
such deadly venom and mischief cover'd
by a mask of Piety. It was the charac-
teristick, we know, of the old Pharisees,
to make long prayers and to devour Widows
houses: our modern ones come not a jot
behind them: we here see the length of
this Pharisee's Prayer; and as far as I can
judge by what I have suffer'd my self,
his mouth is not more open to pray,
than 'tis to devour.

* See his prayer for me, p. 42, &c.

